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# The Prevalence and Focus of Medical Education Fellowships Across North America

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**The Prevalence and Focus of Medical Education Fellowships Across North America**, Nancy S Searle, EdD. BCM, Houston, TX, 77030. Britta M Thompson, PhD. BCM, Houston, TX, 77030.

Medical institutions have established medical education fellowships to equip faculty to meet the challenge of constant educational change and to empower faculty to assume programmatic leadership roles in medical education.

The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence and focus of these programs.

The authors have defined a medical education fellowship as a longitudinal faculty development activity for a single cohort of individuals. An 1 on-line survey distributed by email to 150 medical schools in North America elicited a response from 124 (83%).

Sixty-four schools (51%) do not have fellowships while 60 (49%) do. Participants were asked to describe the focus of their programs indicating if specific topics were a primary, secondary, tertiary focus or not a focus at all. Those topics reported as a primary focus by 50% or more of the programs included teaching skills (75%), curriculum design (52%), scholarly dissemination (52%) and educational theory (50%).

All of the programs were open to clinical faculty; however, some programs included other faculty members from the basic sciences (80%), nursing and dentistry (35%), and public health (27%). Forty percent of the programs admitted residents and/or fellows. Although 60% of the fellowships required only participation for completion of the program, others required a variety of projects: completion (73%) and presentation (57%) of a scholarly educational project, design (34%) and implementation (18%) of a curriculum, creation of a career development plan (24%), entries into a journal and/or reflective writing (23%), development of a learning contract (21%) and presentation of a grand rounds session (10%).

Other information assessed in the survey included: length of program, frequency of sessions, sources of financial support, and types of program evaluations.

A thorough needs assessment should be done prior to beginning a program of this type to facilitate the success of a program.